U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

POLICY GUIDANCE

USAID DISABILITY POLICY PAPER

Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, D.C. 20523
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USAID POLICY PAPER ON DISABILITY

I. USAID DISABILITY POLICY

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is committed to the inclusion of people who have physical and cognitive disabilities and those who advocate and offer services on behalf of people with disabilities. This commitment extends from the design and implementation of USAID programming to advocacy for and outreach to people with disabilities. USAID's policy on disability is as follows: To avoid discrimination against people with disabilities in programs which USAID funds and to stimulate an engagement of host country counterparts, governments, implementing organizations and other donors in promoting a climate of nondiscrimination against and equal opportunity for people with disabilities. The USAID policy on disability is to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities both within USAID programs and in host countries where USAID has programs.

For purposes of this policy, a disability is defined as a physical or cognitive impairment that affects a major life function, consistent with the definition of the Rehabilitation Act.

USAID commitment to disability issues is not new. A 1996 report ("Activities Addressing the Needs of Person with Disabilities," USAID document PN–ABY–746) described the many and varied Agency–sponsored activities in provisioning of prosthetics, treatment and prevention of blindness and special education, providing medical training of individuals who assist persons with disabilities, building advocacy and management capabilities of local organizations that represent the disabled, and the like. This policy is designed to build upon current activities and to enhance the effectiveness of the Agency's commitment.

The policy applies to Agency program funds only, and complements existing USAID disability policies which relate to staffing and personnel procedures. One of the best means of raising awareness in programs is to actively pursue those personnel procedures so that Agency staffing patterns reflect the intention of Agency programs.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) is generally not applicable to USAID's overseas programs. While the ADA applies to U.S. citizens (including USAID employees) overseas, it does not apply to non–U.S. citizens, who are the primary beneficiaries of USAID programs. The USAID disability policy is thus in part an effort to extend the spirit of the ADA in areas beyond the jurisdiction of U.S. law.

II. POLICY OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the USAID policy on disability are: (a) to enhance the attainment of United States foreign assistance program goals by promoting the participation and equalization of opportunities of individuals with disabilities in USAID policy, country and sector strategies, activity designs and implementation; (b) to increase awareness of issues of people with disabilities both within USAID programs and in host countries; (c) to engage other U.S. government agencies, host country counterparts, governments, implementing organizations and other donors in fostering a climate of nondiscrimination against people with disabilities; and (d) to support international advocacy for people with disabilities.

III. POLICY FRAMEWORK

A substantial segment (often ten per cent or more) of any population has impairments. Those individuals are often limited in participating in society by obstacles in the physical or social environment. It is widely recognized that the response to this problem must be a balanced combination of prevention, rehabilitation and measures for the equalization of opportunities. Individuals with disabilities and their caregivers often are taken out of the workforce. The reasons are many: discrimination, lack of educational, vocational rehabilitation or training opportunities, etc. These factors place further economic burden on poor countries where USAID has sustainable development programs. People with disabilities have the same needs as others for nutrition, family planning, health care, training and employment. Many mainstream programs, with minor modification at the design stage, help address these needs. For example, education programs can be developed which promote inclusion of children with physical or cognitive disabilities to the maximum extent feasible. Economic growth activities, such as small business loans lending, can be developed to assure that people with disabilities have equal access to credit. Infrastructure projects can be designed, with acceptable marginal cost, to assure barrier–free access.

In providing humanitarian assistance in post–conflict situations and disaster assistance, early strategically aimed programs both help address the immediate needs of people with disabilities and also provide a foundation on which these individuals more effectively make a positive contribution to the economic development of their country. The disabling injuries caused by landmines provide yet another compelling reason for such programs.

USAID promotes advocacy as an integral part of its democracy and governance objective. As a world leader in the civil rights movement for people with disabilities, the U.S. has seen a strengthening of many local organizations which have formed to support independent living and other disability initiatives as a critical need. In many countries, individuals with disabilities have been 'warehoused' in abysmal conditions with total disrespect for their rights. Those rights must be respected. As young democracies decide where they will concentrate scarce resources, people with disabilities and those interested in the issues of people with disabilities must be among the voices that are heard.

Recently, in certain developing countries, indigenous non–governmental organizations (NGOs) interested in the concerns of people with disabilities have emerged. USAID's general policy with regard to partnership with private voluntary organizations (PVOs) encourages the use of U.S. PVOs to help strengthen indigenous NGOs ("USAID–U.S. PVO Partnership," April 12, 1995; Handbook 1, Policy Papers); inclusion of NGOs interested in issues of persons with disabilities should be considered for this kind of support.

USAID also recognizes the appropriate role of host country governments in creating the enabling environment for disability advocacy and services. Host governments not only create the regulatory environment, but they also assure quality standards and, for donor programs, provide the basis for sustaining these efforts.[1]

IV. OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

A. CONSULTATION

Each USAID Bureau, Mission and Center of the Global Bureau must determine the best ways to consult with the disabled and with those who advocate on behalf of, or provide services for individuals with disabilities.

Each USAID Bureau, Mission and Center of the Global Bureau must also determine best ways for consulting with appropriate host government officials to assure that issues are reviewed with respect to the enabling environment, regulatory concerns, quality assurance standards and maintenance of donor–financed disability activities. USAID will also look to organizations and individuals with in–depth local experience to assist in designing and implementing participatory mechanisms to ensure that USAID strategic objectives and activities incorporate, to the extent feasible, the priorities and values of people with disabilities and groups pursuing these issues and interests in the host country.

B. AREAS TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS

The concerns of people with physical and cognitive disabilities should be considered in the variety of USAID programs for the poorest elements of society including but not limited to programs for children and women, especially early childhood interventions, child survival programs and curriculum development for special education within basic education programs; mass communication and printed materials; development of basic infrastructure (e.g., roads, water and sanitation, public transportation, telecommunications); development of small scale industries or workshops; introduction of new machinery; development of products the use of which requires specific skills; urban or rural community development; development of health care facilities or systems; development of formal and non–formal education, training, career development and job placement services; family planning and health education programs; design and construction activities; and activities related to democracy and good governance, human rights initiatives, and income generation. Where appropriate, USAID may also encourage relevant policy dialogue with host governments.

C. SUPPORTING U.S. PVO AND INDIGENOUS NGO RELATIONSHIPS

Indigenous NGOs, as part of the host society, can serve as a voice for the interests and perspectives of the community of individuals with disabilities or groups interested in their issues. USAID will look to an increasing role for indigenous NGOs to carry out service delivery and to advocate on behalf of the interests of people with disabilities. USAID will actively encourage the formation of effective partnership relations between U.S. PVOs and indigenous NGOs interested in issues of concern to people with disabilities.

D. TRAINING AND ENHANCED AWARENESS

USAID employees and contractors will be trained in issues of relevance to people with disabilities so that, as appropriate, USAID programs reflect those issues. Grantees and contractors will be encouraged to provide relevant training to their staff.

Footnote

1. The National Council on Disability (NCD) is an independent federal agency which was established to promote policies, programs, practices and procedures that guarantee equal opportunity for all individuals with disabilities and to empower individuals with disabilities to achieve economic self–sufficiency, independent living, and inclusion and integration into all aspects of society, and to provide an annual report to the President and the Congress. The NCD issued a report on August 1, 1996, entitled, "Foreign Policy and Disability" which asked whether the United States maintains a coherent disability policy within its foreign policy and found in the negative. In fact, the report concluded that "those responsible for creating and implementing U.S. overseas policies and programs generally lack awareness of disability issues, cannot articulate our national policies with respect to people with disabilities, do not incorporate the interests of people with disabilities into U.S. foreign policy objectives, and do not see the importance of U.S. disability advances and achievements for people with disabilities in other countries." The NCD recommended:

- creating a comprehensive foreign policy on disability to advocate for people with disabilities through activities on international levels;
- extending U.S. disability law by legislation or executive order to include unambiguously the international operations of the U.S. government;
- employing domestic standards of nondiscrimination in U.S.–sponsored international activities;
- training U.S. foreign affairs agencies and their contractors to plan for programmatic accessibility; and,
- establishing the principle that no U.S. international activity should have a lower standard of inclusion than its domestic correlate.

Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination (PPC)
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, D.C. 20523
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POINT OF CONTACT FOR THIS NOTICE IS PPC, HIRAM LAREW, (202) 647–7065.

USAID Disability Plan of Action
"Mandatory Reference"

August, 1997

This Plan of Action is designed to direct the implementation of USAID's Disability Policy. It does so by outlining ways to promote the inclusion of services with and for persons with disabilities in programs throughout the Agency. The Plan of Action is applicable to Agency program activities only, and is consistent with chapters in Series 200 of the Agency's Automated Directive System that deal with personnel and staffing issues (http://www.usaid.gov/M/HR/ads1/htm). The Plan of Action does not require additional personnel, financial reporting, or other elaborate reporting systems. It is designed to be used within existing level of resources, and to complement reengineering guidelines.

1. In order to finalize the establishment of Agency policy on persons with disabilities, the following process will be pursued:

   - The draft policy shall be reviewed by field missions, development partners, and other donors. (Action: Policy and Program Coordination Bureau (PPC), completed)

   - The policy shall be revised and submitted for the approval of the Administrator. (Action: PPC, summer '97)

2. In order to encourage interagency donor collaboration on the issues of inclusion of disability issues in international programming, USAID will participate actively in relevant interagency and inter–donor meetings.

   - USAID participated in the first interagency donor meeting on disabilities held at the World Bank. Also in attendance were representatives from the United Nations' Office of Disabled Persons, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Inter–American Development Bank, the Danish International Development Assistance organization (DANIDA), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Center for Educational Research and Innovation, the African Development Foundation, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Academy for Educational Development and several international disabilities NGOs. (Action: Global Bureau, completed)

   - USAID will participate in quarterly meetings of this interagency working group, and will chair the second interagency meeting. USAID will contribute to setting the mission statement, objectives and activities of this group. (Action: Global Bureau, pending appointment of the Team Coordinator; see 4 below)

   - USAID will explore the development of an international working group with other federal agencies that have programs serving persons with disabilities, e.g. Department of State, U.S. Information Agency, the National Council on Disability, Department of Treasury, Department of Commerce, Department of Education, Department of Health and Human

Services including the National Institutes of Health, the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Social Security Administration, Department of Justice, Department of Transportation, the Access Board, etc. (Action: Team Coordinator, Oct 1, '97)

3. In order to ensure Agency–wide coordination and responsiveness, and to assist and facilitate consideration of disability issues in field and Washington planning, an Agency Team for Disability Programming (ATDP) will be established. Membership will be by invitation of the Administrator, and may include external representatives. No budgetary resources will be required.

- The ATDP will meet quarterly under the leadership of PPC. (Action: The Administrator and USAID/PPC, beginning Sept 30, '97)

- The ATDP will consult annually with various international disabilities organizations, the PVO community through USAID's Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Assistance (ACVFA), the higher education community through the Association Liaison Office for University Cooperation in Development (ALO), and with other organizations and donors through the quarterly interagency donor collaboration meetings (mentioned above). (Action: Team Coordinator, '97)

- The ATDP will foster Agency awareness (e.g. Agency newsletters, USAID Focus, USAID/PPC's Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE) publications, ExoNet, Agency home page, etc.) regarding the importance of including persons with disabilities in USAID programs; promote Agency commitment and responsiveness; and ensure bureau, mission and center review processes occur. (see number 5 below). (Action: ATDP, CDIE, and Public Affairs Bureau, continuous)

- The ATDP will review [or develop] activity reports, identify "lessons learned", and assess the Agency's training program (see point 6 below). A summary annual [or periodic] review will be presented to the Administrator. (Action: ATDP, quarterly)

- The ATDP may establish short–term special working groups, when needed. (Action: ATDP, as needed)

- The ATDP may consider and recommend the establishment of special Agency–wide activities focused on policy and services for persons with disabilities. (Action: ATDP, as needed)

- The ATDP will provide senior staff with an annual briefing on all disability–related activities. (Action: ATDP, each January)

- An Annual Disabilities Recognition Award will be established to recognize USAID staff and/or partners who have promoted integration of disabilities awareness and activities into USAID programs. The ATDP will make information about the Award widely available, identify potential recipients, and provide the Administrator with recommendations for candidates. (Action: ATDP, each June 30)

4. In order to ensure that a central team leader and contact point for activities regarding persons with

disabilities exists within the Agency, the Administrator will designate a Disability Team Coordinator.

- This Team Coordinator will provide support to the ATDP upon request, provide technical assistance to all bureaus, missions and centers as they assess their programs for opportunities to include persons with disabilities, maintain the flow of information on disabilities activities, respond to external enquiries, represent USAID at conferences and meetings on disability or ensure proper representation for technical matters, alert NGOs, institutions of higher education and other organizations about "windows of opportunity" in USAID programs, attend and brief participants at regional bureau conferences and other large–scale Agency meetings, and liaise with disabilities organizations, ACVFA, ALO and key U.S. PVO/NGOs involved with disabilities programming.(Action: USAID Administrator, Oct 1, '97)

5. In order to address appropriately and fully the inclusion of persons with disabilities in Agency programs, the Agency will track progress by compiling an annual [or periodic] summary report.

   USAID/Washington will periodically compile a report that assesses the extent and quality of USAID disability activities, and identifies lessons learned, new models, opportunities and challenges for future programming. Relevant field programs may be visited. The first summary report will be sent to the Administrator with, as needed, recommendations for ensuring Agency momentum and progress on disabilities issues. (Action: ATDP, first report to be completed July 1998.)

6. In order to promote inclusion and build commitment and capacity to address issues regarding persons with disabilities, the Agency will conduct staff development activities.

   - Appropriate training materials for Agency staff members, contractors and other partners will be designed or adapted, field tested and produced, including items such as: a video with practical examples of programs that work; handouts for reflection and action; discussion frameworks for group activities; and suggestions regarding policy implementation. (Action: Team Coordinator and Training Office, for use beginning March 30, 1998)

   - Preliminary staff training will be provided within new employee orientation, diversity training, other relevant on–going staff training sessions and special technical training, as feasible. Operating units will be encouraged to engage in follow–on self–training through the use of the training materials. (Action: Training Office and operating units, beginning as soon as feasible)

   - A letter with abbreviated training materials will be distributed to all Agency contractors, grantees and cooperative agreement partners to encourage them to engage in staff training regarding programming for persons with disabilities. Such organizations will also be encouraged to share their relevant training materials with USAID for review and possible use in our training activities. (Action: Training and Procurement Offices, beginning October 1, 1997)

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POLICY PAPER

This policy paper articulates the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) commitment to pursue advocacy for, outreach to, and inclusion of people with physical and cognitive disabilities, to the maximum extent feasible, in the design and implementation of USAID programming, and provides guidance for making that commitment operational. It is the product of a comprehensive consultative process between USAID and its partners, and responds to issues identified in that process. Note that this policy applies to the use of Agency program funds only and complements USAID's personnel and staffing disability policies. The paper provides the basis from which a policy directive will be developed.

This policy paper does not represent a new initiative. Instead it describes the importance of considering concerns of the disabled within ongoing and future programs. Implementation of the policy will be within existing staff and financial resource levels as determined by each operating unit, and no additional financial reporting will be necessary.

The paper outlines the fundamental principles on which the USAID disability policy is based, including: (1) need for a comprehensive and consistent approach to considering people with disabilities, being sure to include women and children, within USAID and in USAID assisted activities; (2) outreach to and early consultation with persons with disabilities and the community of organizations concerned about them as part of ongoing participatory processes; (3) intent to work as development partners with US and foreign PVOs and NGOs committed to persons with disabilities and to facilitate relationships among these entities; and (4) encouragement of U.S. interagency collaboration and networking among donors and other diverse entities concerned about persons with disabilities with a view to increasing impact and sustaining these efforts.

POINT OF CONTACT: PPC, HIRAM LAREW, (202) 647-7065.